

Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network Reunion
Welcome remarks as prepared
Chargé d'affaires, Ambassador Richard Hoagland
Friday, August 24, 2012, 7:00 p.m.

I am delighted and honored to be here tonight to celebrate the first reunion of the Pakistan-U.S. Alumni Network's Islamabad chapter.

First, I want to thank your Network President, Sameena Imtiaz, for her kind introduction and, much more important, for the work that she has done to make the Alumni Network the thriving organization that it has become. Your network's General Secretary Haseeb Kiyani and all of the chapter presidents also deserve our thanks for their tireless efforts.

The number of you here demonstrates the strength of an organization that has grown rapidly in both activity and numbers in the past two years. You can say with a great deal of pride and satisfaction that it is now one of the strongest and most active alumni networks in the world.

You now have ten chapters that cover the country, from Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir to Balochistan and Jamshoro. You are training students in leadership skills in Islamabad, creating children's film festivals in Lahore, organizing seminars to introduce American scholarship possibilities for girls in Skardu, and working with children with disabilities in Balochistan. You are making a real difference in people's lives.

My American colleagues and I are heartened that it is your good experiences in our country – whether decades ago or only last year – that bring you together as a community, as a group motivated to do good in Pakistan based on what you learned, who you met, and what inspired you when you were in the United States. We admire you and your work.

Americans do, sincerely, want the best for Pakistan. We want to see a secure and safe society free of a brutal, intolerant militancy, a strengthened participatory democracy that is responsive to the needs of the people, an economy that is advancing and creating jobs for Pakistan's growing population, increased educational opportunities for all, and strides forward in improved nutrition and health care.

Obviously, many in Pakistan do not agree that America is Pakistan's friend and partner. We have much work to do to overcome doubts, ill-will and misunderstandings. We are enormously pleased that there are people such as you who know the United States and want to see our countries work together in our mutual interests of peace, prosperity, and security. And we are deeply grateful that you are willing to speak up.

It is Pakistanis who are the best advocates to other Pakistanis of trust rather than suspicion, cooperation rather than conflict, engagement rather than estrangement between our two nations. I believe that virtually every one of you is here because you found the United States a good country and Americans a decent and welcoming people. We are honored and

grateful that this link between you and our country can serve you as individuals and through you serve other Pakistanis as a force for good.

Thank you for your very warm welcome and your very kind attention. It is a pleasure for me to be here with you this evening.